

From the Author.

141.

THE 1357

Sept. 1790

INFLUENCE OF CONSCIENCE,
AND THE
CREDIBILITY OF A FUTURE STATE
OF
RETRIBUTION,
CONSIDERED;

Being the Substance of Two DISCOURSES,

Delivered in the Cathedral Church of WINCHESTER,

At the LENT and SUMMER ASSIZE of the present Year 1790.

The former on MARCH 3, before

The Hon. Sir BEAUMONT HOTHAM, Knt.

AND

The Hon. Sir RICHARD PERRY, Knt.

Barons of his Majesty's Court of Exchequer.

The latter on JULY 15, before

The Hon. JOHN HEATH, Esq.

One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of Common Pleas;

AND

The Hon. Sir NASH GROSE, Knt.

One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of King's Bench.

GEORGE DACRE, Esq. HIGH SHERIFF.

By L. M. STRETCH, A. M.

Vicar of Twyford and Owlbury, and Chaplain to the Sheriff of the County.

Published at the Request of the HIGH SHERIFF, the MEMBERS of
the COUNTY, and the GRAND JURY.

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INFLUENCE OF THE
CIVILIZATION OF THE
ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE
HUMAN RACE



The Hon. Mr. J. Lubbock, F.R.S.
President of the Society of Anthropology
The Hon. Mr. J. Lubbock, F.R.S.
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TO

GEORGE DACRE, Esq. High Sheriff;

Sir WILLIAM HEATHCOTE, Bart.

AND

WILLIAM CHUTE, Esq.

Members for the County of SOUTHAMPTON;

AND THE

Knights, Justices, and Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

GENTLEMEN,

AT your request, and by your obliging commands, the following Discourses, in their present form, are introduced to the public notice; and, with your permission, humbly claim your patronage and protection. Whatever may be my own opinion of the publication of them, I ought not to doubt the propriety of your's. I beg leave, therefore, to assure you that I am very sensible of the honor you have done me, and very happy in the information of the High Sheriff that their Lordships the King's
Judges

Judges expressed their approbation of them. Should they be *read* with the same attention they were *heard*, it may be reasonably hoped they will not prove wholly useless.

There is something in the constitution of human nature, exclusive of education, that points out the difference between *right* and *wrong*. And though it may not enable us to distinguish accurately between the *fitness* and *unfitness* of things, yet it generally and justly discovers what is essentially *good* and *evil*: what tends to the peace and happiness of mankind, and what to interrupt and destroy them. This must surely be an emanation from the Deity, an impression made by the hand of the Creator on the minds of his intellectual offspring. We distinguish it by the name of natural *Conscience*; and this light alone renders us accountable for our actions both to God and our country. To evince its utility and beneficial operation, in a political as well as religious view, was the design of the first discourse; and to shew the happy influence of a sincere and permanent persuasion of future rewards and punishments was the intention of the second. Every attempt to increase the

the force and energy of the former, and render the latter more deep and lasting, is doing the state a real service. It co-operates with the laws in restraining the people from Vice and Injustice under the sanction of the "Terrors of the Lord:" and in rendering them peaceable, loyal, and useful members of society by the "promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come." With this view I apprehend you thought proper to order the publication of these discourses, and I sincerely wish they may answer your benevolent intentions.

YOU, Gentlemen, who have so lately and so *honorably* been chosen the Guardians of our Religion and Laws, have given us a happy presage, by patronizing so humble an attempt, of what we are to expect from you in greater undertakings for the public good. Every proof of your patriotism and love of mankind must give pleasure to your constituents, as it will be an unequivocal compliment to their understanding and discernment in selecting *YOU* for their Representatives. They have committed an invaluable treasure to your care, and convinced the world of their partiality and confidence in your wisdom

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and virtue, by the preference they have given you.
 May you long enjoy the honors to which your merits
 entitle you, and by your essential services to your
King and *Country* command the esteem and affection
 of the people.

I have the honor to be,

With the greatest deference and respect,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient and most obliged humble servant,

L. M. STRETCH,

Twyford, Hants, July 17, 1790.

ECCLESIASTES, chap. xi. ver. 9.

FOR ALL THESE THINGS GOD WILL BRING THEE
INTO JUDGMENT.

WHATEVER may be the respective merits,
the love of praise, and the desire of being
commended, is common to all mankind. We wish
to appear amiable in the sight of those we love.
We reflect upon their approbation with a secret joy,
and their censure fills us with confusion. Nor can
we be wholly indifferent to the sentiments of others
concerning our conduct. We feel these passions very
early in youth; they gain strength as we advance in
life, nor ever leave us in old age; and, under proper
regulations, they may be rendered subservient to the
most valuable purposes. [It is true, the judgment
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Page 1.*

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of the most impartial observer, is fallable. Its determinations may be erroneous, thro' prejudice or partiality, by its own innate weakness, or the artful insinuations of others; and, therefore, a wise man will never suffer his happiness to depend on the precarious foundation of other men's praises or censures. But a contemptuous disregard of them would betray a depravity of temper, and the absence of that delicate sensibility which is the constant companion of real merit. Besides the good or ill opinion of those with whom we are of necessity connected, and on whom we are dependent; who have it in their power to reward or punish us for our conduct, is of importance, and it becomes our duty and interest to cultivate the one, and avoid the other.

2.

Religion, which is the distinguishing excellence of our nature, and ever solicitous for our good, strengthens and improves these natural feelings. It grafts its own influence upon them, and renders us more susceptible of pain and pleasure from the consciousness of our good or bad conduct. But, while it approves the reverence we pay to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, it inspires us with a nobler ambition.

ambition. It directs our views to that Being who
alone is worthy of supreme regard; because he alone
can justly estimate our character, and whose estima-
tion of it is of infinite consequence. It informs us
that he who made us, and for whose pleasure we 2.
are and were created, will be our Judge. "That he
" seeth our ways, and counteth all our steps. That
" he searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the
" imaginations of our thoughts; and, ^{that} for all these 3.
" things, God will bring us into judgment."

That there will be a future state of rewards and punishments is clearly revealed in the sacred scriptures. It is a truth, likewise, that, with very few exceptions, has been universally acknowledged, tho' the nature and circumstances attending it have not been fully understood; and, indeed, it was impossible they should be, till a divine revelation unfolded and explained them. The light of reason confirms it; the nature and fitness of things require it; and the natural feelings and forebodings of conscience render it indubitable.

Nothing can be more plain and intelligible than
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the account which the scripture gives us of a future ^{rewards & punishments.} state of retribution. It has fixed the time of its commencement, and relates the awful and astonishing appearances that will precede and accompany the trial of mankind; and when the righteous discrimination is made between them, describes the happiness of the good, and the misery of the wicked, in a manner the most serious, solemn, and affecting.

4.

“ He hath appointed a day in which he will judge
 “ the world in righteousness, and render to every man
 “ according to his doings, for there is no respect of
 “ persons with God. He will then bring every work
 “ into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be
 “ evil.” But, previous to the appearance of the Judge,
 “ there will be signs and wonders in heaven. The
 “ sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give
 “ her light. The stars shall drop from their spheres,
 “ and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. An
 “ angel shall descend and proclaim that time shall be
 “ no more. Upon the sound of the trump of God,
 “ the earth and the sea shall give up their dead. The
 “ dead

“dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and
“come forth and live.” And then “must we all ap-
“pear before the judgment seat of Christ. Those who
“are found guilty shall be turned into Hell, where
“there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of
“teeth ; but the righteous shall be received into life
“eternal, into the vision and fruition of that God,
“in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose
“right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

This is the simple and unadorned relation which
the scripture gives us of the process of that last as-
size, which will terminate the transactions of this
world, and the fate of all its inhabitants. It need-
eth not the aid of human eloquence to enhance its
grandeur, or give energy to its terrors. Every cir-
cumstance is interesting to the highest degree. All
that is dear and valuable, all that can be hoped or
feared, through endless ages, depends on the decisions
of that awful day.

The reality of this description, and the certainty
that we shall all be witnesses of this solemn scene,
must chiefly rest, no doubt, on the veracity of the
scriptures.

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scriptures alone. But there are so many presump-
tive arguments which may be deduced, by the light
of reason, from the nature and fitness of things, to
confirm the truth of it, that no one can be excused
in denying it, unless he can show, by incontestible
proofs, that either there is no God, or that the scrip-
ture is certainly a forgery. Till that is done, every
man is justified by the rules of prudence and self-
love, in receiving it as true, and being influenced by
the hopes and fears which it inspires.

7 | It is not my design, because it would be improper
at this time, to enter into a discussion of these points.
 By far the greater part of mankind are unacquainted
 with philosophy and metaphysics. They lie beyond
 the reach of their comprehension, and therefore the
 reasoning produced by the help of those sciences can
 be of use only to men of leisure and learning. And
 this shews, among other arguments, the necessity of
 a divine revelation, and the utility of such a plain
 and simple account of a future state of rewards and
 punishments, as all might understand; and which
 should exert its influence on the passions, as well as
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the judgment, and have a manifest tendency to excite the hopes and alarm the fears of every individual. And such is the scriptural account of the future judgment.

There is one argument, however, which I will mention, because it is level with the capacity, and confirmed by the experience and observation of every one. It is this: If there be a God, he must be infinitely wise, just, and good. The attribute of wisdom is indisputably seen in the creation and furniture of the world; but his justice and goodness in the government of it is not so visible. There is no equal distribution of infelicity and happiness according to the deserts of virtue and vice to be seen. Reason and justice appear to be disregarded, and the good and the bad are promiscuously happy and miserable without distinction. "All things come
"alike to all. There is one event to the righteous
"and the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him
"that sacrificeth not. As is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an
"oath." Therefore, as we cannot reconcile present

appearances, or what happens to individuals, or families, or nations, with the description of perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness, we may reasonably conclude that the present state is imperfect;—that we see only a part of the government of God; and that another state of existence is necessary to complete the administration of impartial justice and goodness.

7 Till the contrary is proved, we must, then, take it for granted, that the words of the text hold forth to us a certain and most alarming truth—That the God that made us will call us to account for all our thoughts, words, and actions. “For all these things “God will bring thee into judgment.”

That he hath an undoubted right to do it, and that his nature and peculiar qualifications render him perfectly capable of doing it, is evident both from reason and revelation.

8 He is our creator, preserver, and benefactor, to whom we are indebted for our existence, and all the pleasures

pleasures and comforts that render it desirable. He is likewise our sovereign Lord and righteous Governor, to whom we owe allegiance and submission. "The Lord" "is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord "is our King." He has, therefore, an unquestionable right to enact what laws he pleases, to establish such a form of government over his subjects as he knows will be most conducive to their good and his own glory, and to demand their implicit obedience. And, happily for us, every act of his power is a proof of his goodness. What he requires of us has a manifest tendency to promote our present and everlasting felicity; and what he forbids is evidently destructive of both. Every sin, therefore, which we knowingly and wilfully commit, is an instance of detestable ingratitude and heinous rebellion. It strikes at the root of his authority over us, and is subversive of that order, justice, and regularity, which he would have maintained among ourselves. It tends likewise to alienate our affections from him, to cloud the understanding, to prejudice the judgment, to harden the heart, and unfit us for those acts of piety, adoration, and intellectual pleasures, for which

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he designed us. Can we then be surpris'd, or complain—"That God should be angry with the wicked every day—That his wrath should be kindled against them, and that he should account them as his enemies—That for all these things he should bring them into judgment." Surely not. "He hath reserved them unto the day of destruction, and when he visiteth, what shall they answer him?" Can they justify their conduct, or dispute his right to punish them for it? As the former would be impossible, and the latter fruitless, so neither can they hope that any part of their behaviour will escape his notice; for "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the evil; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked and open to the eyes of that God with whom we have to do."

The omniscience of God qualifies him in a peculiar manner for being our Judge. It is not always that our fellow-creatures can be eye-witnesses of our actions, and when they are, their judgment of them is subject to error and misrepresentation, because our
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motives and inclinations may lie concealed. These enter into the nature of all actions, and, as they are either good or bad, lessen or increase their value or deformity. But there neither is nor can be any circumstance attending the minutest transactions of our lives, or the intentions of our minds, that can be hid from the all-pervading eye of Heaven. "He seeth in secret, and there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed,"

His omnipotence renders the execution of his purposes irresistible. What He wills, he can do without aid or assistance. What power can be exerted against him that did not derive its very existence from him? Cannot he recall what he lent? Cannot he destroy what he built up? Who then shall oppose his will; or what would opposition avail? From men it would be absurd; the lamb might as well contend with the lion. From Devils it would be fruitless; They are already confined in chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day. As nothing can escape his eye, so neither can any thing withhold his hand. "Power, almighty,

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10 "irresistible power, belongeth unto God." But, though he can do what he will, he can never do what is wrong.

His holiness and justice are our sufficient security that his omnipotence will never be exerted in a way inconsistent with the rectitude of his nature. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Sin is that thing which his soul hateth;" and he has declared "he will take vengeance on them that know him not, and who obey not the gospel of his Son." But he has also assured us, "that when he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins," it is with the equitable view "to render to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." And who can object to this? He hath placed us in a state adapted to our nature as moral agents. It gives scope to a voluntary obedience, or a careless neglect of, and perverse opposition to his laws. The former will be rewarded, and the latter punished. "If thou doest well, shall thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at thy door."

What

What has hitherto been said is, I think, so plain, so well supported by scripture, so agreeable to the nature and fitness of things, as to need no other argument to corroborate the truth of it. To the thoughtful and well-disposed, I am persuaded, it does not: but, unhappily, *they* are not the greater part of mankind. There are men in the world who fall under a very different description,—“ Men of reprobate minds, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, whose feet are swift to shed blood: haters of God: inventors of evil things: full of all unrighteousness, maliciousness, deceit: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

We ought not to be surprized if such men should affect to disbelieve a future state, should treat the scripture with contempt, and ridicule every thing that is sacred and serious. It is their interest that they should have no reality; and it would be their happiness could they fully believe it. But it is impossible:

possible: "For that which may be known of God
 "is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto
 "them." He hath not left himself without a wit-
 ness in their own bosoms, "which sheweth the
 "work of the law written in their hearts, their con-
 "science, and their thoughts accusing them." Not-
 withstanding their affected ease and indifference, such
 persons are not, cannot be satisfied, and happy in
 themselves; because their feelings and their reason
 are in opposition to their conduct. The feelings of
 the heart are so many heavenly monitors, which
 point out our duty, enforce the discharge of it, and
 when we neglect it, never fail to reprove us. The
 truth of this is verified by the universal experience
 of mankind. Let us each recollect what have been
 our own feelings. Can any of us look back on
 the transactions of our lives, and then look up to
 Heaven and say, we never felt either shame, for-
 row, or fear? Whatever may have been our de-
 viations from the paths of virtue, truth, and
 righteousness, we approved them. No struggles, no
 reluctance, no shuddering apprehensions preceded
 the commission of sin, and in our cool and dis-
 passionate

passionate moments of reflection, we were perfectly easy in the contemplation of it. This cannot be; for he that is conscious of a crime must be apprehensive of punishment; they are inseparably connected. He may hope and flatter himself that he shall conceal it from the knowledge of men, and this may produce a temporary and desultory quiet; but when he reflects on the deed, he must fear detection and its consequences; and should he escape these, "his heart has still hold of him," will not cease to upbraid him with the past, and alarm him with the future. This is not an imaginary picture. It is borrowed from the confessed feelings and acknowledgment of both good and bad men; of those who have continued in the practice of sin till public justice have stopped their career, and of those who have happily returned to virtue. All agree that fear and uneasy sensations are the inseparable companions of guilt. "Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth," says one. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," says another. These are among numberless attestations, that no man can sin with impunity. It is a violation of his feelings, which are wounded

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by

by it—an act of rebellion against conscience; the prime minister of Heaven, who will sooner or later not only rebuke, but punish it with severity.

The reason and common sense of mankind do likewise militate against the wickedness of their conduct, and reprove them for it. Every man, whose reasoning powers are not wholly subverted, and his understanding darkened by the repetition of his crimes, must clearly perceive that genuine piety and moral virtue have a natural tendency to promote the honor of God, and the peace and happiness of mankind. On the contrary, that no state, no form of government whatever, can long subsist, in which vice and wickedness are countenanced, or suffered to pass with impunity. The reason is evident. They are in their nature and tendency inimical to the peace, property, and well-being of the subjects. They contain a subtle poison, which, though it may sometimes operate but slowly, will, notwithstanding, most surely produce destruction. This is so plain a truth, that every man must see it. In a qualified sense, therefore, every overt act of wickedness

N^o 6. pa. 7.

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edness which a man intentionally commits, is an act of rebellion against the state: For the laws of this country are founded on the basis of Christianity; and there is not, perhaps, any sin forbidden by religion, against which there is not an existing law to prohibit the commission of it. A good Christian, therefore, cannot be a bad subject; and a good subject cannot be an immoral Christian: So near is the alliance, so close the connection between the church and the state; they are built on the same foundation, are designed to answer the same ends, and have the same benevolent purposes in view; namely, the peace and protection, the comfort and happiness of mankind. The means made use of to accomplish these ends are, indeed, and ought to be, widely different. The ministers of religion are to endeavour the good of mankind, by cool and dispassionate reasoning, and the mild and gentle arts of advice and persuasion. Where these fail, the ministers of the state happily step forth, with the sword of justice, unsheathed, and *enforce* obedience to its laws; and, were it not so, what anarchy and confusion would reign among us! “The solitude of the
“desert

" desert would be preferable to it; the cave, where
 " subterraneous winds contend and roar; the den,
 " where serpents hiss, and beasts of the forest howl,"
 would be a happy retreat from the cruelties and de-
 predations of lawless man. Can any one be igno-
 rant of this, and will not his heart upbraid him for
 contributing to it? Affuredly it will: For in all
 ages human nature has been the same. " In the
 " circle of worldly affairs the same characters and
 " situations are perpetually returning; and in the
 " follies, passions, vices, and miseries of generati-
 " ons that are past, we read those that are present
 " and to come." Hence we learn that conviction
and remorse will sooner or later follow the commis-
sion of sin, as naturally and as certainly as the
shadow does the body. The history of mankind
leaves no room to doubt it.

No 6. pa: 7

10 | If the sinner believes there is a God, and that he
 ought to be obeyed, he stands convicted by the evi-
 dence of this faith alone. The ideas of justice and
holiness as naturally arise in the mind when we con-
template the perfections of the Deity, as mercy and
goodness;

goodness; and no one that believes the existence of //
God, can at the same time believe that he can see
and approve the vicious and injurious conduct of his
creatures. What bears no resemblance to his own
nature, and is in direct opposition to his own con-
duct, can never be the object of his approbation and
complacency. On the contrary, it must, in the
reason and nature of things, be offensive to him; and
as every wilful sin is a contempt of his authority,
tends to subvert his moral government, and is a de-
fiance of his power, it necessarily becomes the object
of his reproof and punishment. And must not every
man condemn himself for leaving the paths of rec- //
titude and peace, and for exposing himself to the
vengeance of an omnipotent Being?

If he acknowledges the divinity of the Scripture,
he must be confronted by such evidence, as will not //
only strike conviction, but terror through his soul.
It is a mirror in which every one may clearly per-
ceive his own features; and for that reason, perhaps,
it is so seldom looked into. Every character is drawn
with wonderful truth and exactness, and placed in

12 so proper a point of view, that we cannot mistake
our own. The situation of the wicked is described
in few words, but their meaning neither men nor
angels can fully unfold—"The wrath of God abideth
"on them." What pains and tortures one human
being, armed with resistless power, can inflict on
another, we may form some idea; but what Omni-
potence incensed is able, or may think right to inflict
on the obstinate and impenitent sinner, surpasseth
all conception. And can any man be easy and happy
under the apprehension of it, and the consciousness
that he has deserved it? Surely not. Remorse will
corrode, and anguish torture his mind when he se-
riously reflects on it. The terrors of the Lord,
when let loose on the guilty soul, like the storms
and tempests in the natural world, will spread hor-
rors, desolation, and misery around them. All the
luscious ideas of past enjoyments, and all the gay
imaginings of anticipated pleasures, will be dis-
persed like chaff before the wind. Every deep laid
scheme of avarice, fraud, or oppression, will be
rooted up and driven from his thoughts, like the
ruins of fallen buildings in a sudden inundation.

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An universal gloom will overspread the mind; his sins, like so many frightful spectres, will haunt his guilty breast, and wound his soul, as with empoisoned arrows. But gloomy and dreadful as his present situation is, it is ease and pleasure, compared with what is to come. For him "is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever!" He now *feels*, with agonizing pain, the truth of that awful threatening—"God will render to every man according to his deeds; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil."

I am well aware that what has been said is liable to exception. That too many, instead of feeling the compunction and distress which has now been described, *appear* to be perfectly easy and unconcerned. Their conscience *seems* to give them no trouble. They sneer at religion, and laugh at its terrors. They are neither *afraid*, nor even *ashamed*, to accumulate their guilt by the repetition of their crimes. They roll iniquity as a sweet morsel under their tongue; and add sin to sin. But are they *really* as tranquil as they *appear* to be? If they are, dreadful

ful, indeed, must be their situation. It is a state to which they could never have arrived, but in opposition to the checks of conscience, and the reproaches of their own hearts. These, like slighted and affronted friends, have withdrawn their attentions, and left them in the undisturbed enjoyment of the pleasures of sin, for a season. But this very tranquillity is part of their punishment. "Woe be to them that are at ease in Sion." "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he hath given them over to a reprobate mind. They are become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they are become fools." And now nothing more is wanting to complete their wretchedness, than to perpetuate their infatuation. This was the curse which God inflicted on his antient incorrigible people the Jews. "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone."

Admitting, therefore, the possibility of suppressing the clamours of conscience, and the remonstrances of reason, in this life, it is no proof of the safety of

of a bad man's condition; nor any security against their renewed and more successful attacks in some future period of his existence. Here he may be betrayed, through the deceitfulness of sin, and the false appearances it assumes to hide its deformity. He may deceive himself by calling good evil, and evil good. Through ignorance and inattention he may misrepresent his vices, and mistake their nature and tendency, and thereby lull himself into a fatal security. Or, the avocations of life may disperse those fears which his suspicions would create. The necessary business of the world may engross his attention, or its gaieties and amusements dissipate reflection. By a thousand ways he may elude the assaults of conscience; or, by frequent conquests over them, harden his heart, and glory in his shame. But for all these things, God will bring him into judgment. He *will*, because he thinks it right to do it; and for which he has given him notice to prepare himself. He *will*, in spite of all opposition; "for who can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?"

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When

When that great and terrible day of the Lord is
 come, the business and the pleasures, the wants and
 temptations of this world, will cease for ever. The
 one will no more demand, nor the other allure our
 attention. Every attraction, every fascination will
 drop its hold on us. The heart will be set at liberty
 from the enchantments of vice, and CONSCIENCE
 meet no enemy to obstruct the execution of its office.
 The soul will stand naked and defenceless. The
 brightness of that day will throw light on every dark
 and mysterious transaction; will penetrate through
 the mists of ignorance, prejudice, and artful misre-
 presentation. The film that obscured our sight will
 drop from our eyes, and we shall see, with one in-
 tuitive view, all that is past, present, and to come.
 Conscience, like a baffled and enfeebled enemy, see-
 ing its advantage, and enraged at its frequent defeats,
 will assume its native power, assert its rights, and
 revenge its slighted friendship. || Every circumstance
 will give strength and energy to its renewed attacks,
 and co-operate to alarm, distract, and torture the
 soul. The trump of God, that calls the dead to life,
 and the living to assemble; that rocks the battlements
 of

17

$$\frac{17}{2nd}$$

$$\frac{17}{1st}$$

$$\frac{17}{1st}$$

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of heaven, and shakes the mountains from their foundations: The myriads of departed ghosts starting into life, with wild disordered features, pierced with conscious guilt, and writhing in agonizing tortures: The sun turning into darkness, and the moon into blood: The stars dropping from their spheres: The earth on fire, and the heavens melting with the fervent heat thereof, will all conspire to recal reflection, and quicken his sensibility. It cannot be otherwise; for by the decree of God, and the constitution of nature, the wicked are easily alarmed. A scene so different from the present, from any thing the race of man ever beheld till now, cannot but affright the sinner, and excite all the horrors of conscious guilt. Reluctant—ghastly—trembling—he will approach the bar of God. The exalted nature and infinite perfections of the judge will leave him no hope, by concealment or misrepresentation, to escape the demerit of his crimes. They were all committed under his eye and immediate inspection. The Judge himself was a witness to them all; to the motives from whence they proceeded, and the aggravations with which they were attended. Every sin now starts up in

19 | in its genuine form. No art can hide, no colouring
conceal its deformity. No power can save, no mercy
be shewn him. Every refuge fails, every hope for-
takes him. What is past recoils, and what is to come
rushes, like a torrent, on his helpless soul. To
think is to be miserable; and not to think now, im-
possible. “To perceive the punishment of hell is
 “to be instantly inflicted, to be confounded with its
 “greatness, yet to feel it just; not to dare to call it
 “too severe, nor to be able to alledge one reason
 “why it should not be executed—is an agony with-
 “out a name.” “From this moment the sinner be-
 “comes his own tormentor. Despair penetrates to
 “the very seat of sensation, and converts all his
 “thoughts into instruments of torture. The infer-
 “nal fire begins of itself to kindle within him, and
 “the worm that never dies to prey on his heart!”

19 | Such is the melancholy fate of the wicked, whose
life is unhappy, and whose death is miserable.

| If what has been said is true, it certainly demands
our immediate attention. Sin is of a destructive na-
ture. It spreads ruin, disgrace, and misery wherever

it

it comes. The ravages of war, and the devastations of the sword and pestilence, have never done half the mischief to a state, as the corruption of manners. Piety and virtue are the pillars of government. Throw down these, and the whole fabric must fall with them. What private person, what family, what nation were ever happy, prosperous, and respectable, who were ^{im}merced in vice, profaneness, and irreligion. "Fools may make a mock at "sin," but wise men fear and tremble at it; because, from experience and observation, from private anecdotes and public records, from the universal history of mankind, wherever it has prevailed, it has carried destruction along with it.

20

How necessary is it then to listen to the advice, and obey the dictates of conscience. It is in most cases an unerring guide. Between man and man it is an infallible director. "Whatsoever ye would that "men should do unto you, that do ye also unto "them," is a rule of conduct universally approved. And why should it not hold good in the government of states and kingdoms? Policy may gain an acci-

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dental

21.

dental and temporary advantage; but when it usurps the seats of justice, equity, and true wisdom, it generally defeats its own designs. Nothing but fear will controul where it is in vain to look for esteem and affection. Let us then, whatever be the part assigned us to act, consult our bosom friend. Let us foster and keep alive our natural feelings; they are the gifts of heaven, the very image and impress of the Deity. When a man is reconciled to himself, when he is not afraid to look into his heart, when his mind is open to conviction, when he only wants to know his duty, in order to do it, he then enjoys that peace and serenity, that satisfaction and self-complacency, which the world can neither give nor take away. So far from being inclined to question a future state of rewards and punishments, he will see the propriety and necessity of it. He will look forward to the one with hope and expectation, and to the other with awful submission; but without fear, or distressing apprehension.

On the contrary, should not the miseries and misfortunes, which attend the pursuits of wickedness,
convince

convince us of the necessity of a different conduct?

The heart is appealed to, in this case, by the most powerful of all arguments—the attainment of its own happiness. Let the time past, then, suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh; let us henceforth begin to live unto God—to live for eternity! “Let 22

“the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous

“man his thoughts, and let him return unto the

“Lord, who will have mercy on him, and to our

“God, who will abundantly pardon.” We have

now the means of grace in our possession, and the

hope of glory is not unattainable. We may yet re-

pair by repentance the mischiefs we have done by sin.

The mercy of God, through Christ, is still offered

to *all*, on the sole condition of amendment; and

with mercy, divine assistance, to prevent our relapsing

into sin, and to confirm us in the habits of virtue.

23.

Therefore wisdom, prudence, self-love, every inte-

resting consideration, calls upon us to “attend to

“the things that concern our peace, before they are

“for ever hid from our eyes.”

*See pa: 15 of this book
the marked ~~the~~ page
there follows here
in N.B.*

To

To sum up all, let it be remembered, that if we hope to taste of life without anguish, if we would enjoy serenity of mind, and peace of *conscience*, they are only to be found in the abstinence from sin, and the discharge of our duties; the duties we owe to God, our country, and ourselves. He who does nothing to recommend himself to the favour of God, can have no reasonable hope of happiness in a state of *retribution*. He who is regardless of the duties he owes himself and relatives, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel; and he who wilfully breaks the laws of his country is an enemy to God and man, and justly incurs the indignation of both.

This would be doubly criminal in us who have the happiness to live under a government that is not far distant from perfection; in which, *while one department does not encroach on the power and prerogatives of another*, our lives, liberties, and property are securely guarded: Our property, by a code of most equitable laws; our liberties, by charters and statutes which the Sovereign himself has sworn to observe; and the administration of criminal justice is in our
own

own hands. In this neither the King, nor his Judges who personate and represent him, can interfere. They may prosecute, but not condemn; they may shew mercy, but cannot revenge even their own injuries; they may save life, but cannot take away that of the meanest subject, but by the judgment of his peers. What an inestimable blessing is this! In this consists our freedom, our safety, and our happiness. But let it never be forgot, that we are indebted to the excellence of our Religion for the pre-eminence of our constitution. We cannot therefore discover the love of our country more effectually than by promoting a rational and manly piety. They that fear God, are most likely to honour the King. Very few have either ability or opportunity to serve him by the wisdom of council, or the valour of arms; but we may all do it by a peaceable submission to the laws, and a proper respect to the religion of our country. This is our duty, and we shall find it to be our interest.

F I N I S.

